



## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs (NEA)

Office of Middle East Partnership Initiatives (MEPI)

Funding Opportunity Title: Supporting Independent Media II

Announcement Type: Pre-applications

CFDA Number: 19.500

Due Date for Pre-applications: March 31, 2006

Federal Agency Contact: Jacquelyn Johnstone

Email: [nea-grants@state.gov](mailto:nea-grants@state.gov)

Telephone number: 202-776-8697

**I. Funding Opportunity Description:** The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) announces an open competition for projects to advance free and independent media in the Middle East and North Africa.

The purpose of this RFA is to provide needed technical and material assistance to independent media outlets in the region for the continued support of media reform efforts with focus on underserved local priorities in particular countries. Under this RFA, local media outlets may seek funding for specific needs and activities.

This competition is open to local, privately-owned media outlets (print, broadcast, and new media) that are committed to public service-oriented programming and to objective, locally-oriented content. MEPI will support with promising independent outlets by providing appropriate assistance, and where required technical guidance, to promote independent operations, self-sustainability, and to develop professional, fact-based and balanced media.

MEPI is seeking concept papers as pre-applications under this RFA. Applications should detail the objectives, company or organization background, management's professional experience, market

conditions, and budget with justification. Applicants should outline how they plan to pursue the creation of content that serves the public good while addressing any organizational weaknesses and operational challenges. The submission must explain the overall approach as well as plans for product distribution and advertising and how these activities will be implemented. Submission should describe also how MEPI assistance will increase financial viability of the outlet.

Applicants should outline clearly how their concept will advance one or both of the following reform goals: strengthening local democratic practices and institutions by developing public service content; and increasing the political space by creating programming to share public information and promote political reform. RFA applicants must demonstrate knowledge of the media industry in their country.

Some areas of activities that could be supported through this RFA include but are not limited to:

- Local news coverage that serves the public good or creates a forum for discussion on political processes, which might include election and candidate coverage, parliamentary proceedings, etc;
- Content that covers issues of local concern to citizens as they take greater involvement in their society and government;
- Innovative technological or other approaches that encourage public participation in reform issues and enable the interaction of the society with public officials and civil society leaders to expand political pluralism.

All proposed budgets should project significant cost sharing. Any associated customs, duties, and taxes on any equipment must be paid for by the receiving outlet.

Concept papers may be submitted by local independent print, broadcast, and news media (such as the Internet) outlets. Government-owned, -funded, or -affiliated media are not eligible to participate. Any collaborative relationships between the applicant and other organizations should be clearly stated and their role as partners clearly defined. Pre-applications may be submitted by outlets in: Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria (no equipment), Tunisia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, and the West Bank and Gaza.

Background Information about MEPI: MEPI is a Presidential initiative to promote positive change in the Middle East and North Africa through diplomatic efforts and through results-oriented programs, both regional and specific to individual countries. Reform is of strategic, long-term importance to the national security interests of the United States and to the U.S. goal of ensuring that the people of the region experience the benefits that come with political freedom, more open economies, and greater educational opportunities. A key element of MEPI is creating links and partnerships with Arab, U.S. civil society, private sector, and governments to jointly achieve sustainable reform.

Funding Instrument Type: Grants

Anticipated Total Program Funding: Up to \$5 million in Federal Fiscal Year 2006

Electronic Link to Full Announcement: Go to <http://www.mepi.state.gov>, click on Current Opportunities, click on Media Program Announcement.

**II. Award Information:** MEPI expects to make up to 7 awards ranging from \$100,000 to \$1,000,000. An award may be funded for up to two years.

MEPI reserves the right to award less or more than the funds described in the absence of worthy applications, or under such other circumstances as may be deemed to be in the best interest of the U.S. Government.

Project and Budget Periods: Proposed project and budget periods may be up to 2 years.

**III. Eligibility Information:** Eligible applicants include for-profit and not-for-profit organizations.

All Federal assistance recipients must have a Dun & Bradstreet Number prior to funds disbursement per a new U.S. Government policy (published in the Federal Register June 27, 2003) applicable to all grant recipients.

At the time of application submission, please ensure that your organization has applied for a DUNS number. You may acquire a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or you may request a number on-line at [www.dnb.com](http://www.dnb.com)

**IV. Pre-Application Submission and Deadline:** Applications should include a five-to-seven-page concept paper, plus a budget summary with narrative. The submission should clearly outline project objectives, activities, impact, expected results, and methods for monitoring and evaluation.

While English is preferred, the concept papers also may be submitted in French, or Arabic. Those invited to submit full applications must do so in English. Selected pre-applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal for funding consideration and may receive technical assistance in this process.

Pre-application materials should be sent via email to Ms. Jessica Baker at [nea-grants@state.gov](mailto:nea-grants@state.gov) with **“Media Outlet” (in English) in the subject line. Applicants must receive email confirmation from MEPI that the application has been received in advance of the March 31, 2006 deadline.** Any applicant that would have a difficult time submitting an electronic version of the application should contact Jacquelyn Johnstone before March 1, 2006. After that date, pre-applications will be considered as MEPI receives them on a rolling basis.

**V. Review and Selection Process:** Submissions under this announcement should include information addressing the following criteria. Each pre-application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of these evaluation criteria that are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project, and to determine the likelihood of its success. The criteria are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of a pre-application. Those receiving a score of 65 or more out of 100 points will be invited to submit full applications.

*Results or Benefits Expected*—The results and benefits to be achieved are clearly described and project milestones suggested. Proposed outcomes are tangible and achievable within the grant project period. (40 points)

*Organization Profiles*—The application demonstrates the organization's capacity to implement the project and includes: (a) Agency mission and organizational chart; (b) resumés or position descriptions of project staff; (c) history of experience with similar work or projects; (d) a management plan and financial management systems in place; (e) timeline for implementation of project activities; and (f) plan for sustaining all or part of the program should federal funds be no longer available. (30 points)

*Approach*—The applicant must demonstrate that its strategy and plan are likely to achieve the proposed results; that proposed activities and timeframes are rapid, reasonable and feasible. The plan describes in detail how the proposed activities will be accomplished as well as the potential for the project to have a positive impact on reform efforts in the Middle East and North Africa. (20 points)

*Budget and Budget Justification* – The budget and narrative justification are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results and the plan for services is realistic. The budget documents the necessity, reasonableness, and allocation of all proposed costs. Adequate travel to and within the Middle East is proposed. The application documents any efforts to secure other funding sources. (10 points)